



Pavel Tchelitchew, *Bullfight*, 1934
© Sotheby's

An elaborate silver-gilt and shaded cloisonné enamel presentation kovsh, 1908-1917
© Bonhams



Despite increasing tensions between the UK and Russia, cultural projects between the two countries continue to delight audiences. London remains a hub for Russian art and culture with a wide range of exhibitions, concerts, theatre and performances. This spring, Russian Art Week returns from May 29-June 5, with sales of Russian art at the major auction houses accompanied by Russian cultural events.

This will be the sixth edition of Russian Art Week in the capital, presenting a great opportunity to discover new names as well as to enjoy famous classics. The last Russian Art Week in November 2014 was affected by economic sanctions, when we saw a 37 per cent decrease in sales in comparison to the previous year – the lowest result since summer 2012. However, despite a reduction in spending by collectors, there has been some positive news, including the sale of Valentin Serov's 1910 *Portrait Of Maria Zetlin* at Christie's. It became the most expensive painting ever sold in a Russian art sale, fetching £9.2 million and making Christie's the current leader among the auction houses with a 49.7 per cent market-share. The international situation makes it difficult to forecast the result of the upcoming sale, but I predict major works by artists with a good provenance will continue to do well.

Auction houses continue to offer remarkable Russian art works and this summer is not an exception. Bonhams will present a delicately painted landscape by Ivan Pokhitonov, a late still-life by Alexandra Exter, and an exquisite silver-gilt presentation kovsh decorated with shaded cloisonné enamel, produced by a Moscow artel in the very

WHAT TO SEE AT RUSSIAN ART WEEK

BY THEODORA CLARKE

beginning of the 20th century. Christie's is offering a range of paintings and decorative art, including *Arsenal Hill At Night* (1907-1908), a rare work by Niko Pirosmiani, the proclaimed Georgian Primitivist artist. It is also displaying a lavishly decorated two-colour gold-mounted guilloché enamele desk clock, a wonderful example of the two most popular techniques used by the Fabergé workshop.

Hosting three sales of Russian art in June, Sotheby's will offer a diverse selection of Russian art from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, including a stunning set design for the original production of Igor Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* by Alexander Benois. A separate sale will focus on Russian decorative art with highlights including a rosewood, porcelain and gilt-bronze writing cabinet, which is one of a small group of nearly identical writing cabinets produced on the orders of Emperor Nicholas I and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna for members



A fine 19th-century gilt bronze and malachite ink well
© Brun Fine Art

of their family by Ernst & Peter Gambs with the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory.

The MacDougall's auction will present two charming depictions of Russian nature by well-known masters – *Autumn On Krestovskiy Island*, 1892, by Ivan Shihkin and *Spring In The Country*, 1920, by Konstantin Korovin. Among other lots, Pavel Tchelitchev's *Portrait Of My Father*, 1939, and *A Peasant Woman On The Trunk*, c. 1910, by Nikolai Fechin, also deserve a special mention.

Contemporary Russian art will be presented in Maxim Boxer's sale at Erarta Galleries London. It is the third themed auction, this time co-curated with world-renowned Russian artist Leonid Tishkov, and will examine the tradition of "cartoon-like art" in Russia, tracing the evolution of its visual language and distinctive humour from the lubok imagery of the 18th century towards the contemporary pictorial art, comics and animation.

In addition to the auctions, a programme of cultural events will be taking place across London. To celebrate Russian Art Week at Erarta Galleries London, Tishkov brings his *Private Moon* to London for the first time since 2013 (see page 44). Iconostas will showcase its selection of Russian and Soviet paintings, drawings and posters, while Brun Fine Art will exhibit, among other objects, a beautiful pair of 19th-century armchairs in gilt bronze and faux malachite, and a fine 19th-century gilt bronze and malachite ink set, including ink stand and ink well.

Other exhibitions include Tate Modern's show dedicated to 20th-century Russian émigré Sonia Delaunay, a leading abstract painter, and Pushkin House's photography exhibition of Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer James Hill called Russian Veterans, marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Studio Voltaire will present a show of works by Sanya Kantarovsky called Apricot Juice, inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's enigmatic masterpiece novel *The Master And Margarita*.

Music enthusiasts will not be disappointed by the variety of concerts and performances during Russian Art Week. The renowned singer Hibla Gerzmava will perform a selection of the best Italian and Russian opera at Opera Holland Park. On the South Bank pianist Alexei Volodin will be making an appearance at Queen Elizabeth Hall, and English National Opera will present *The Queen Of Spades*, a dramatic new production of Tchaikovsky's opera about greed and obsession.

Visit: www.russianartweek.co.uk for more information, and to find out where to get a copy of the Russian Art Week guide. Theodora Clarke is the founder of Russian Art Week.



Nikolai Fechin, *A Peasant Woman On The Trunk*, c. 1910
© MacDougall's

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Filipp Malyavin, *Baba On A Swing*
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